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The Director of Central Intelligence
Washington, D.C. 20505

NIC 5925-83
16 August 1983

National Intelligence Council

MEMORANDUM FOR: Acting Director of Central Intelligence
VIA: Chairman, National Intelligence Council
FROM: Graham E. Fuller
National Intelligence Officer for NESA
SUBJECT: Downward Spiral in Lebanon

1. The events of the past few weeks and days present us with a singularly bleak outlook for US interests in Lebanon. I believe we must face the prospect that our current policies towards Lebanon are not going to work; we should begin to develop a new policy outline based on the fall/assassination of Gemayel, the collapse of any pretense of an effective central government and the return of confessional fiefdoms dominating local areas.

All the indicators are now moving the wrong way on our policy commitment to a unified, confessionally reconciled Lebanon:

- Amin Gemayel is not able to come to terms with other elements of the Lebanese population -- Druze, various Shia, other Christians. National reconciliation is an unrealistic hope and, in Gemayel's eyes, a secondary goal to withdrawal of foreign forces anyway.
- Each confessional element expects the worst case situation and is preparing for the not too distant day when the central government collapses and confessional groups will have to fend for themselves. They are arming and organizing for a political/military struggle.

Our own policy is now hostage to the fate of national reconciliation in Lebanon and McFarlane is making this the key goal of his mission at this point. Yet,

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- Gemayel is deeply suspicious of US intentions in pushing for confessional reconciliation which he cannot accept -- and fears we are going to sell him out.
- Gemayel himself is a highly logical target for assassination by many different groups: Syrians, the Druze, Shia, militant Sunnis and opposition Christians. If Gemayel dies or is otherwise rendered impotent, US policy in Lebanon is virtually back to square one.

Israel understands the political realities of Lebanon pretty well, including the need for national reconciliation if Gemayel is to survive as a national government capable of running the country. Israel wants a strong central government and wants to cooperate with Gemayel to get it but only if that government makes an unequivocal peace settlement with Israel. Ironically Israel is now rather bitter and cynical about the Maronite Phalange which it feels has repeatedly let them down badly ever since June 1982. Israeli insistence on formal exchange of ratification instruments, however, will probably be the coup de grace to the already slim chances Gemayel has of making it.

Gemayel now seems to be using the Lebanese Army as a substitute for national reconciliation -- a sure fire failure. It will be lucky not to break up along confessional lines even if Gemayel reaches agreement with the Druze in advance before the LAF's deployment. The MNF cannot be a substitute for LAF responsibilities, but Gemayel may wish it to serve in that role.

Breakdown into de facto partition and a return to confessional fiefdoms is almost a certain prospect as things now stand. From the point of view of cold US long-range interests in the Middle East the salvation of Lebanon from itself may not be that important. The administration has clearly committed itself to restoring the integrity and independence of Lebanon, however, which makes it difficult but not impossible to employ a policy of benign neglect.

- In terms of Israel's security, Israel's own creation of a northern security zone under its own control will be at least as effective as anything Gemayel could do. But the US will be perceived as tacitly supporting the further de facto expansion of Israel.
- Syria will claim the cause of forcing Israel out of Lebanon as its own, through use of its forces as well as Shia and PLO surrogates. The chances of major Syrian-Israel conflict down the road are good.
- The US will also be perceived as having failed again to demonstrate its credibility in seeking peace in the region.

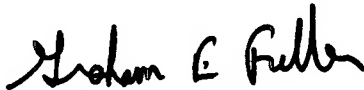
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These effects, although undesirable, are not necessarily intolerable over the longer run. Future breakthroughs towards an overall peace initiative, however, will probably depend on either:

- a major cataclysm between Syria and Israel, opening up new options;
- the break-up of the PLO and the emergence of a moderate wing willing to negotiate; or
- Jordan attempting to go it alone -- a very risky course.

Otherwise we must be ready to face the fact we have reached the end of the road in Lebanon this time around.


Graham E. Fuller

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